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**Contact: Jamie Callahan**

**(517) 373-2413**

## ***Boating Hit-and-Run Legislation on Course***

**Felony punishment now same as vehicular hit-and-run**

LANSING – Stricter sentencing guidelines for boaters involved in hit-and-run accidents navigated the Senate this week as the legislation was unanimously approved by the Michigan Senate.

Co-sponsored by Sen. Jason Allen, R- Traverse City, Senate Bills 658 and 659 change the penalties for the operator of a boat involved in a hit-and-run accident resulting in death or serious injury from a misdemeanor to a felony. This change makes the penalty for this crime the same as for those causing a hit-and-run accident in an automobile.

“These bills will help make our lakes and rivers safer for all Michigan citizens,” Allen said. “If a person is the victim of a hit-run-accident, it should make no difference if the crime was carried out by someone behind the wheel of an automobile or a boat.”

Currently, the driver of a boat involved in such an accident is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a maximum sentence of 90 days in jail. Under the proposed changes, someone guilty of failing to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing death would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison and up to \$10,000 in fines. Someone guilty of failing to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing serious impairment would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and up to \$5,000 in fines.

"Northern Michigan is known for its beautiful waters where many of us learned to swim shortly after we learned to walk," Allen said. "This legislation ensures equal justice for people who are injured whether they are out for a swim or just taking a walk."

Senate Bills 658 and 659 now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.